



The Public Policy Voice for the Roman Catholic Church in the State of Hawaii

HEARING: House Committee on Veterans, Military, & International Affairs, & Culture and the Arts

SUBMITTED: April 14, 2015
TO: House Committee on Veterans, Military & International Affairs
Rep. Ken Ito, Chair
Rep. James Tokioka, Vice Chair

FROM: Walter Yoshimitsu, Executive Director

RE: Support for SCR 165 SD 1 Supporting the Co-Naming of a Section of 33rd Street in New York City to Father Damien Way in Honor of Saint Damien DeVeuster

Honorable Chair and members of the House Committee on Veterans, Military & International Affairs, & Culture and the Arts, I am Walter Yoshimitsu, **representing the Hawaii Catholic Conference**. The Hawaii Catholic Conference is the public policy voice for the Roman Catholic Church in the State of Hawaii, which under the leadership of Bishop Larry Silva, represents Roman Catholics in Hawaii. We strongly support this resolution.

In 1873, Fr. Damien arrived in Hawai'i and served the people of Molokai with determination and compassion. He left a strong legacy of care for the physical, medical and spiritual needs of a community in need. He taught the world to become an effective advocate for the voiceless.

Although his Feast Day is celebrated on May 10th of every year, this year, on May 11, 2015, a street-naming ceremony will be held in New York City. This celebration is to honor his legacy by co-naming a section of 33rd Street between 1st and 2nd Avenues to Father Damien Way. The street is near to the Bellevue Hospital in New York City which opened in 1736 as a six bed hospital. Bellevue continues to provide care to those not only with Hansen's disease, but also the poor and underserved. Having a street named after Fr. Damien so near to a hospital like Bellevue, is a true legacy of not only the spirit of Fr. Damien, but the people of Hawai'i.

We appreciate that New York City is aware of the faith and purpose exemplified by Fr. Damien in his total commitment to people in need. Co-naming a section of the street near to Bellevue Hospital in his memory is a great way to show the solidarity between Hawai'i and New York City.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.